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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PHUM, UR, US, OVIP (REAGAN, RONALD)
SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECEPTION A / SUCCESS

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

SUMMARY

2. THE PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION FOR DISSIDENTS AND REFUSENIKS MAY 30 WENT OFF WITHOUT A HITCH, THANKS IN PART TO KGB AND MILITIA COOPERATION. AFTER PRESENTATIONS BY SERGEY KOVALEV, YULIY KOSHAROVSKIY, AND FATHER GLEB YAKUNIN, THE PRESIDENT GAVE A SPEECH ON HUMAN RIGHTS THAT HIS AUDIENCE VIGOROUSLY APPLAUDED. THE RECEPTION WAS COVERED BY A PRESS POOL, INCLUDING SOVIET JOURNALISTS, WHO MADE A POINT OF SEEKING OUT SERGEY GRIGOR'YANTS FOR AN INTERVIEW. SOVIET MEDIA COMMENTARY FOLLOWED SWIFTLY AND WAS BITING AND SARCASTIC.

END SUMMARY

GUESTS ARRIVE WITH FEW PROBLEMS

3. THE PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION FOR REFUSENIKS AND DISSIDENTS WENT SURPRISINGLY WELL. ALL THOSE INVITED WHO WISHED TO COME WERE PRESENT. ALTHOUGH PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO BOTH THE EMBASSY AND SPASO WERE BLOCKED FOR THE DURATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT, SOVIET MILITIA AND KGB AGENTS FACILITATED EMBASSY EFFORTS TO FIRST BOARD GUESTS AT THE EMBASSY AND THEN DRIVE THEM TO SPASO, THROUGH THE THREE- OR FOUR- LAYERS OF SOVIET SECURITY THERE. THERE WERE A TOTAL OF NINETY-EIGHT RECEPTION GUESTS, INCLUDING SMALL CHILDREN AND ONE INFANT -- WHOSE CRIES DISTRACTED GUESTS FROM THE SPEECHES BUT ADDED A HONEY TOUCH TO THE PROCEEDINGS. GUESTS HAD COME FROM THE BALTICS, UKRAINE, GEORGIA, CENTRAL ASIA, AND A NUMBER OF RUSSIAN CITIES. (COMPLETE GUEST LIST FOLLOWS SEPTEL.)

KOVALEV, KOSHAROVSKIY, AND YAKUNIN SPEAK

4. SERGEY KOVALEV, A MOSCOW UNIVERSITY BIOLOGIST FIRED IN 1969 FOR PROTECTING THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND SUBSEQUENTLY EDITOR OF THE "CHRONICLE OF CURRENT EVENTS") WAS THE FIRST SPEAKER, COVERING GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, PARTICULARLY STRESSING THE NEED TO RELEASE ALL POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS PRISONERS AND TO REFORM THE LEGAL SYSTEM. HE CALLED ON THE WEST TO SUPPORT PERESTROYKA BUT NOT TO THE DETRIMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. YULIY KOSHAROVSKIY (A REFUSENIK OF SEVENTEEN YEARS) THEN SPOKE ON THE PROBLEMS OF JEWISH REFUSENIKS, DISCUSSING BOTH THE DIFFICULTIES OF EMIGRATION AND OF MAINTAINING A JEWISH IDENTITY IN THE SOVIET UNION. FINALLY GLEB YAKUNIN (A RUSSIAN ORTHODOX PRIEST AND FOUNDER IN THE MID 1970S OF THE COMMITTEE TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF BELIEVERS WHO WAS SUBSEQUENTLY IMPRISONED. HE WAS RELEASED FROM EXILE LAST YEAR) DELIVERED WHAT WAS GENERALLY AGREED TO BE THE BEST PRESENTATION -- A CONCISE BUT MOVING DESCRIPTION OF THE DEGENERATION OF SOVIET SOCIETY, THAT HE BLAMED LARGELY ON THE ATTEMPTS TO BAN RELIGION, AND A CALL TO RELEASE ALL POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS PRISONERS. WHEREAS KOVALEV HAD STATED THAT SINCE HE COULD NOT NAME ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS HE WOULD NAME NONE, YAKUNIN SINGLED OUT DEACON VLADIMIR RUSAK AND LITHUANIAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS SVARINSKAS AND TAMKEVICIUS. (NOTE. A NUMBER OF ACTIVISTS FROM UKRAINE COMPLAINED THAT THERE WAS NO SPEAKER FROM A MINORITY NATIONALITY; THEY ASKED THAT THE EMBASSY HAVE MORE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THEM RATHER THAN GOING THROUGH MOSCOW ACTIVISTS. IN PARTICULAR, THEY ASKED THAT WE DEAL WITH THE "INTER-NATIONALITY COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF POLITICAL-PRISONERS" ("MEZHNATSIONAL'NYI KOMITET V ZASHCHITE POLITZAKLYUCHENNYKH") WHEN QUESTIONS ON NATIONAL MINORITIES ARISE, SINCE THIS COMMITTEE HAS TAKEN ON BROADER RESPONSIBILITIES THAN JUST THE DEFENSE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.)

A FAMILY EVENT

5. MANY GUESTS BROUGHT THEIR CHILDREN, INCLUDING SOME WHO WERE QUITE SMALL, SEVERAL OF WHOM WANDERED AMONG THE TABLES DURING THE SPEECHES. THE MOOD WAS INFORMAL BUT INSPIRED -- ALL THE SPEAKERS GARNERED LOUD APPLAUSE, WITH THE AUDIENCE REPEATEDLY INTERRUPTING THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH. AFTERWARD, THE SOVIET GUESTS' COMMENTS WERE UNIVERSALLY POSITIVE. MANY WERE CLEARLY MOVED BY THE EVENT AND THE PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR CAUSE. BUSES RETURNED THE GUESTS TO THE EMBASSY, WHERE MOST SOON DEPARTED, ALTHOUGH SOME REMAINED AND SPOKE TO A FEW WESTERN JOURNALISTS UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF OUR EMBASSY GUARDS.

PRESS COVERAGE

6. THE REGULAR PRESS POOL -- FIFTEEN SOVIET, FIFTEEN AMERICAN, AND FIFTEEN INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS -- COVERED THE RECEPTION. AT THE END, SOME SOUGHT OUT INDIVIDUAL ACTIVISTS FOR INTERVIEWS. THE SOVIET TV CREW MADE A SPECIAL POINT OF SEEKING OUT SERGEY GRIGOR'YANTS -- WHO WAS HARSHLY ATTACKED BY GORBACHEV IN HIS RECENT WASHINGTON POST INTERVIEW. SOVIET MEDIA WAS SWIFT AND BITING. "VREMYA," THE SOVIET EVENING NEWS PROGRAM, INCLUDED COVERAGE OF THE SPASO EVENT IN REPORTING OF THE DAY'S SUMMIT ACTIVITY. "VREMYA" FEATURED A SHARP COMMENTARY BY SOVIET PEACE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND POLITICAL COMMENTATOR GENRIKH BOKOVICH. HE MADE SARCASTIC REFERENCE TO THE SPASO

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GUEST LIST, CLAIMING THAT ONE INVITEE WAS A FORMER
NAZI CAMP GUARD WHO HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE ARREST
AND KILLING OF SOVIET PARTIZANS. BOROVIK COMMENTED
THAT THE KREMLIN WAS NOT "IRRITATED" AS HAD BEEN
REPORTED IN SOME QUARTERS, BUT LAHMENED THAT THE
PRESIDENT WOULD "WASTE TIME" ON PEOPLE WHO COULD NOT
PROVIDE AN OBJECTIVE PICTURE OF SOVIET SOCIETY. THE
RECEPTION HAD CLEAR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES, BOROVOK
ADDED, NOTING THAT IT WAS CLEARLY NOT INTENDED TO BE
A SERIOUS DISCUSSION. "PRAVDA" AND "IZVESTIYA" IN
THEIR MAY 31 EDITIONS ECHOED BOROVIK. "PRAVDA"
CALLED THE SPASO EVENT A "SHOW" FEATURING "OPPOHENTS
OF PERESTROYKA". "IZVESTIYA" CHARGED THE WHITE HOUSE
USED SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES
AND QUESTIONED THE PRESIDENT'S SINCERITY BY NOTING HE
HAS NOT MADE TIME TO RECEIVE AMERICAN INDIANS AND
OTHERS IN THE U.S. WHOSE HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE BEEN
TRAMPLED UPON. WHILE THE "VREHYA" ACCOUNT NOTED THAT
GRIGOR'YANTS WHO HAD BEEN "CONVICATED OF SPECULATION
IN ART WORK" AND RECENTLY CRITICIZED BY GORBACHEV,
HAD BEEN PRESENT, "IZVESTIYA" FAILED TO NAME HIM.
INSTEAD, THE ORGAN OF THE SOVIET COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
SINGLED OUT OGORODNIKOV, TIMOFEYEV, ROZHKO (WHO THE
PAPER CLAIMED HAD WORKED FOR THE GERHANS), ABE STOLAR
(WHO IT WAS NOTED WAS NOT A REFUSENIK), AND FATHER
EDEL'SHTEYN.

7. LENINGRAD MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. MATLOCK

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